

Parsons Nursery, Parking Building
South side of U.S. Route 219, .25 miles
southeast of Parsons
Parsons Vicinity
Tucker County
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-237-A

HABS
WVA
47-PARS.V
1A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

HABS
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HABS No. WV-237-A
PARSONS NURSERY, Packing Building

Location: South side of U. S. Route 219,
.25 miles east of Parsons,
Tucker County, West Virginia

USGS Parsons Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 17.614338.4327820

Present Owner: Monongahela National Forest
Department of Agriculture
Sycamore Street, Box 1548
Elkins, WV 26241

Last Occupant: Department of Natural Resources
State of West Virginia

Last Use: Parsons Nursery packing building; vacant

Significance: The Parsons Nursery packing building was
built in 1931-2 and expanded in 1936, with
general operating funds. It was that part of
the Parsons Nursery where two- to five-year-
old trees were packed for shipment to other
National Forests in the eastern United States
and reforestation sites in Monongahela
National Forest. For overview of Parsons
Nursery, see HABS No. WV-237.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1931-2, partial construction drawings dated July and August, 1931 (WV-237A-7, WV-237-8). Rear wing addition: 1936, Forest Service photograph, captioned with completion date, 1936 (WV-237-A-5).
2. Architect: Architect uncertain, landscape architect unknown. George W. Root, who had been Examiner of Surveys for the Southern District of Monongahela National Forest in 1926, drafted the plans and elevations for this building. W. I. Doty drafted the basement door details. Probably Root, Doty, and D. A. Oliver, Parsons Nursery manager, designed this and other early nursery buildings. Root signed the drawings for the office, original wash house, workshop/warehouse, pump house, implement building and storage buildings (demolished).
3. Original and present owner: Monongahela National Forest.
4. Builder: The packing building was constructed for Monongahela National Forest by contract labor, according to John King.
5. Original Plans: Blue prints for the foundation, main floor, and second floor plans and end elevation are dated July, 1931; details for the basement doors' construction are dated August, 1931. Drawings housed at Monongahela National Forest Offices Archives, Elkins, WV.
6. Alterations and additions: The building appears to have been built exactly as noted on drawing. An east wing of one-and-one-half stories was added in 1936. This wing was demolished by a flood in November, 1985.

To be demolished: 1990.

B. Historical Context:

The packing building was constructed about the time young trees were first ready for harvest from the new nursery, in the fall of 1931 or early 1932.

In the packing building, two- to five-year-old seedlings of both conifers and hardwoods were sorted, wrapped and boxed for shipment to at least the following sites: Monongahela, Allegheny, George Washington, Cumberland, Unaka, Jefferson, Green Mountain, Pigah, Wayne National Forests, and Appalachian Experimental Station. The largest year of

recorded production was 1938, when 4,126,000 trees were processed from this building for reforestation in National Forests of the eastern United States.

Trees were harvested while still dormant, beginning in late February. Harvesting continued through April and often began again in the fall after trees became dormant. A tool with a bar that ran underground, under the roots, lifted the seedlings in the transplant bed (see WV-237-31). Men collected the trees and brought them to the packing building. Women sat at each of the tables in the packing building where they counted, sorted and bundled the tree seedlings. They tied each bundle with twine cut from large coils of rope that was stored and cut in the attic of the packing building. Women sorted and tied seedlings because the nursery manager considered them more dexterous and faster. The trees were then placed on a conveyer belt that ran down the center of the building to a varnished, maple chute that delivered the bundles to the basement.

Two floor-height openings on either side of the building at the north end were used to sweep out the extra dirt that came off the tree roots while they were bundled.

In the late 1950s, Woody Woodrum installed a metal conveyor belt salvaged from the Coca Cola Bottling Plant in Elkins, WV. It was used to move seedlings around to packing tables.

In the basement, the seedling bundles were stored for later shipment or packed for shipping. Stored bundles often were chilled with ice cut from the Black Fork River, according to Dorsey Knight. Trees were shipped on the railroad or picked up at the packing building by trucks (WV-237-A-6). According to Al Allison, in the 1950s most seedlings were harvested one day and shipped the same day or the following day. Trains or trucks left Parsons in each direction once a day.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The packing building is one of a complex of Forest Service buildings constructed in a simple, rustic, gable-roofed, shingle style. This building uses native materials available in Monongahela National Forest, such as chestnut sheathing boards and joists and it follows the local convention of exterior diagonal wind-brace sheathing with herringbone, centered joints used under sawn cedar shingle siding.
2. Condition of fabric: Flood damage has shifted the

structure on its foundation. The rear wing has been demolished, the opening left exposed to the weather. Sash is missing from some windows. The basement is filled with dirt and flood debris. This building may be structurally unsound.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: A one-and-one-half story, rectangular plan, 40'-4" x 20'-4", three front bays, two side bays. This building has a full basement and attic loft. A one-and-one-half story rear wing with full basement and half-story first floor was added in 1936, demolished in 1985. It was about 11' x 40'.
2. Foundation: 8" poured concrete, full basement with 8' ceiling. The 1936 wing extended the basement 40' to the rear.
3. Walls: Exterior walls are shingled with random-width, cedar, sawn shingles applied in courses of 5" exposure. There are 5-1/2" plain yellow-painted corner boards. The foundation-roof height at the corner is 11'-6"; the foundation-peak height is 22'.
4. Structural system: The wood frame walls are "2x4's", on 21" centers. The framing is exposed, painted white. The wall sills, wall plates and corner posts are doubled "2x4's". Both door and window framing studs are also doubled "2x4's". Walls are covered in 1" diagonal sheathing boards that meet in herringbone joints at the center of both end walls and sides--a typical West Virginia mountain framing system. The main and attic floors are "2x8" rafters on 16" centers laid upon a center 10" steel I-beam supported on two wood mid-posts. The floors have three sets of bridging. Rafters are "2x6's" on 20" - 24" centers. About 1/3 of the framing members are chestnut, others are pine. The attic is inaccessible.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: There is a poured concrete stoop of four risers and iron pipe banisters.
6. Chimneys: 24" x 20" interior, wire-cut brick without cap.
7. a. Doorways and doors: Front center doorway has plain board 4-1/2" architrave with butt jointed head that extends 1/2" beyond jambs. It has a 1/4" metal drip cap. There is a 1-1/2" threshold. The doorway height is 6'-11". The five-panel door of pine plywood has molded panels. The sliding door hardware

is missing except for 3" strap hangers and an iron piece affixed to the bottom of the door. The north basement entry had double doors, now missing. One sheet of architectural blue prints describe the basement doors (see WV-237-A-8). Doorways and doors are painted yellow.

- b. Windows and shutters: All main floor windows are alike, 4'-10" x 3'-0". Attic windows are 3'-9" x 3'-0". Windows are double hung sash of 1/1 lights, 4-1/2" jambs and head with 4" board below the sills. There are 6" x 24" vent holes, covered in hardware screen, 14" above the front windows. There are floor height openings 2'-3" x 1'-3" with board-and-batten covers at each north corner of the main floor. These were used for sweeping out excess dirt that clung to the freshly harvested tree seedlings. Window sash and trim, vent trim and soil clean-out opening trim are painted yellow. There never were shutters.
- 8. Roof: The gable roof has asbestos shingles that have replaced the original cedar shingles. It has exposed rafter ends with a plain "1x8" fascia. There are galvanized, half-round gutters. Each gable end has a "2x10" rake board, clipped to meet the fascia. The "1x8" ridge board and "4x4" wall plates extend beyond the rake board, but neither are beveled, as they are on most other nursery buildings. The gable overhang is 10", including the rake board; the eave overhang is 18", including the fascia. The cornice trim and exposed rafters are painted yellow.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The rectangular building has the original tables used to pack trees and the conveyor belt used to transport bundles of packaged trees from the tables to the basement. The perimeter conveyor belt was installed by Woody Woodrum for Alvin Allison in the 1950s. It came from the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant in Elkins. The basement and attic are both inaccessible.
- 2. Stairways: The ladder to the attic, to the left of the chimney, has been removed and access to the attic has been boarded up. There was an opening to the attic in the middle of the main room, which has been boarded up.
- 3. Flooring: The floor is 3" tongue-and-groove yellow pine.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Both walls and ceiling are exposed framing, painted white. Ceiling height is 10'.

5. Openings: The doorway has 4-1/2" plain jambs and no head. The window jambs and heads are 4-1/2", butt-jointed and shellacked pine. Sash is plain with beveled mutin bars and 1" rounded sills. There is a 5" shellacked pine board under each window sill.
 6. Decorative features and trim: None.
 7. Hardware: The front and basement door hardware is missing. Each window has brass-plated thumb locks.
 8. Mechanical equipment: Heat originally was provided by a coal- or wood-fired stove connected to the end chimney. Present lighting is from ceiling-mounted metal bulb holders that may have had reflectors. There is no plumbing.
 9. Original furnishings: The work tables and conveyor to the basement are original.
- D. Site: The building faces southwest, at 237°30' . It survives on a very disturbed site. A rubble stone embankment with 3' diameter galvanized culvert is 26 yards from the front steps. The culvert is 24' long. Red spruce trees along the road survived the flood of November, 1985 (see WV-237-A-4 for building in its historic context of abutting nursery beds).

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural drawings: two sheets, dated July, 1931, and August, 1931, located at Monongahela National Forest Offices, Elkins, WV.
- B. Historic views: National Forest Service photographs, Monongahela National Forest Office, Elkins, WV.
- C. Interviews: Alvin Allison, 7-23-1989, Charleston, WV, Parsons Nursery supervisor, 1952-57; Londa Bennett, 6-11-1989, Davis, WV, Parsons Nursery employee, 1930-1939; John King, 8-5-1989, Wanakena, NY, silviculture supervisor, CCC Camp Parsons, 1933-39; Dorsey Knight, 10-24-1989, Parsons, WV, Parsons Nursery employee, 1932-1951.
- D. McKim, C. R., Monongahela National Forest History, unpublished manuscript, November, 1970.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

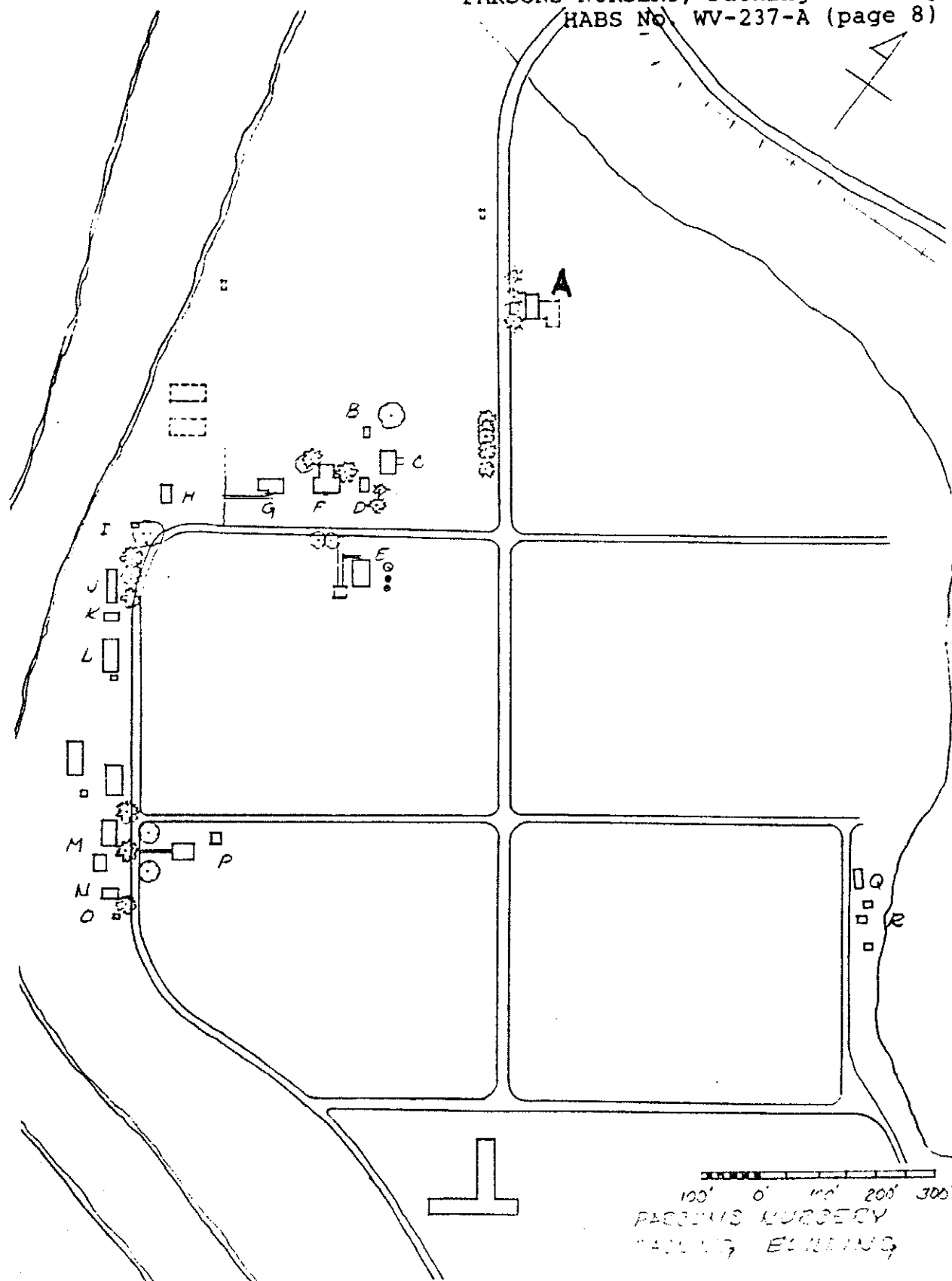
The architectural and historical documentation of the Parsons Nursery Bottom site has been undertaken to fulfill a memorandum

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of agreement signed by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the West Virginia SHPO and the USDA Forest Service as part of requirements under regulation 36 CFR 800 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Recording has taken place prior to substantial modification and/or removal of structures damaged by a flood in November, 1985.

This documentation has been prepared by: Rebecca M. Rogers, Preservation Consultant, 44 Audubon Road, Youngstown, Ohio, under contract to Monongahela National Forest, April-November, 1989.

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